road. The missions have tried, with unequal results, to ameliorate the fate of old people without children; certain clan "societies" have also been active in this direction, but none of it goes very far. Moreover, the old people accept their lot and occasionally joke about it among themselves with the rather biting irony that seems one of the mental characteristics of the group. Some old people kill themselves "from being tired of life." According to Trilles, some used to burn themselves to death voluntarily. According to Largeau, the heirs took the initiative in this so as to make the inheritance available.

The least wretched old people are those with children, particularly sons (1), since daughters usually live with their affinal family. There

1. Cf. Eza Boto, Ville cruelle (no. 182), for an illustration of relations between mother and son.

does exist a genuine obligation for children to provide parents with food, which is sanctioned by paternal or maternal curse in case of default.

f. Death and the Afterlife

Every death is suspect, but that of a nya mod more than another, because a nya mod does not die; someone kills him, though it may be none other than himself. Therefore the death of a man of some importance was always followed by an autopsy: the ngengan would cut open the body and examine the thoracic organs, nlem, the seat of intellect and will, to look for signs of sorcery, the work either of another or of the dead man should his évu have turned against him or been killed by a malignant agency. There also appears to have been a magic process, évómód, that revived the dead long enough to put questions concerning the cause of death.

If the autopsy revealed that the deceased was a sorcerer, nnem, the body was burned or thrown into a large river or perhaps buried at a crossroads far from the village. If he were mie, free of évu, the regular mortuary rites ensued. The body was washed in warm water, massaged and softened, then rubbed with haa dissolved in palm oil, wrapped in a white loincloth, watched over by armed men while the grave was made ready and the relatives /102/ and affinal kin /allies/

commun/ were buried by their co-wives and the women of their affinal family. Bongô and bikeñelé were buried at home with no other ceremonial than the mother's mourning.

When signs of sorcery were found on a corpse, the ngengañ or mvimvi'i turned to divination to find the presumed culprit, who was subjected to an ordeal of bitter herbs. As a general thing, wives had to submit regularly to the pimento or ant ordeals to make them confess not only the part they might have had in the husband's death but also their adulteries. When no one was found responsible for the death of a mie individual (nonsorcerer), it was decided that he had been the victim of a breaking of taboo, nsem, sometimes unwittingly. Whatever the cause of death, sorcery or nsem or repercussion from an act of sorcery, purification always occurred, generally by a sacrifice at the end of the mourning period (meyep). /103/

The duration of mourning was, and still is, a mbu /six months/, but it is now less rigorous. Formerly the wives of the dead man were secluded, naked, for a month in his hut, the first wife lying on his bed; their heads and all their body hair were shaved, and they were painted white with ash and forbidden to wash or do their hair until the end of mourning. The dead man's brothers and sons shaved their heads and let their beards grow without trimming or combing; their foreheads were painted white and they wore only old clothes. They had to observe a series of prohibitions concerning certain ways of hunting, the eating of certain kinds of game (perhaps the dead man's personal totem?), all journeys, the circumcision of the dead man's sons, the use of a bed, etc. The end of mourning was marked by a sacrifice and often by a melan ceremony in order to enter into communication with the dead man.

The strictest mourning was observed for the death of an esa, a man of the father's age grade, less for a monyañ, and hardly any for a mongô. With regard to women, a man observed solemn mourning only for his mother and first wife, and this meant mourning within the family, while a man's death involved the whole village. However, an epidemic was followed by heavy mourning, and when the one presumed responsible was identified, it was not enough that he pay avutan, compensation, he was burned or drowned (his immediate family was constrained to pay the avutan), and then a general purification was undertaken.

radical with feminine connotations (yi = to wish, also meaning "to need," "to cry"; it conveys an idea of "desiring," in contrast to kɔ̂mbɔ̂, related to kɔ̂m = to arrange, put in order, do properly, and bo = to do, make, conveying an idea of "will"; the passive form of yi, yian, means both "duty" and "to be well," "to suit"). Much research needs to be done while there is still time.

d. Sorcery, Possession

Malignant sorcery, ngbwel, is generally attributed to a sorcerer, nnem (plur: beyem, cf. yem = to know, to dream), being possessed by a malevolent being, an évu (Fang, évur, évus). The évu is not an immaterial spirit but a living being, an animal like a crab or centipede, and lodging in the internal organs of the nnem. At an autopsy it is often found in the form of a polyp or tumor, a fibroid tumor in women. It may even happen that the nnem's body does not show such an indication, because the évu has escaped, but there will be some traces of it, fluids, distention of the stomach, colon, or gall bladder. In such cases, as has been said, the corpse is not buried in the usual manner but is burned, thrown into a river, or buried at a crossroads far from the village, in order to prevent the nnem's kɔ̂n from returning to haunt relatives and neighbors.

The possessed person may be unaware of the possession, but he is held no less responsible for the harm caused by the évu. The latter goes out at night while the nnem is asleep and feeds on the blood, metyi, hence strength, tyî of its victims, who fall ill, grow weak and die, or it eats their nkem (heart and lungs), which brings on madness or mental decay and often death, too. The évu also feeds on eggs, on metyi /sic/, and on milk, preferably women's milk (menyɔ̂, from nyɔ̂ = to give the breast, cf. -nyɔ̂ = mother, in compound words), food which village people will not touch. When the évu has trouble in getting food, it may turn against the nnem and kill it for nourishment or, if the nnem is a woman, it may attack the children in her womb. Aside from these occasions, ngbwel is an advantage to the nnem, even when it is unconscious; he benefits from the strength accumulated by the évu during its nocturnal hunts; furthermore, the évu assists him, brings a sort of luck to his undertakings, which is natural, since the évu gains from the nnem's intermediation. This kind of luck, asâé (from a verb, sâ, with like meaning: a ngɔ sâ

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The young man is armed. He has undergone the initiation of the bawu and henceforth he has a right to speak in the council. He will not take advantage of this until the day he brings in the hand of an enemy he has killed and he is able to testify to his bravery in the presence of all by this striking proof of a daring exploit, yet often carried out by surprise.

[Pp. 535-536, 18 lines of music.] [537]

III. Consecration of the Chief

a) The ceremony

A tribal chief has died. After the customary lamentation and funeral feast, he has been buried in a temporary grave. Thirty days afterwards the warriors again reassemble for the solemn funeral dance, the fanki. Then the eldest son, surrounded by leading warriors, opens his father's grave, climbs down beside the corpse, and with the consecrated knife detaches the skull, which will soon be added to the skulls of earlier ancestors in the évora bièri. Then the corpse is carefully replaced in the grave, and the totemic sacrifices are completed. We shall go back to these sacrifices when discussing individual mortuary rites. The eldest son or the heir removes the akaméyón or tribal totem, if he has not already done so. He then throws the earth back onto the corpse and everyone helps him in this dismal task, after he has thrown the first handfuls. All these rites belong to the social mortuary ceremonial.

The new chief returns to the village. Then begins strictly speaking, the totemic rite of consecration, which takes place at night, without any female observers.

Escorted by all the warriors, to the beating of a tom-tom, the chief takes the évora bièri containing the ancestral skulls and carries it into the forest. The ceremony is secret only as regards women; young boys may be present.

The box of skulls is put on a sort of platform made of newly cut poles. These must come from a special tree, the éfiéfira, and must all be alive and green. A bit of dead wood